

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph 1 with the following amended paragraph:

The primary antimicrobial agent used in this invention (to ensure a microbiologically stable and non-sour tasting beverage) should be suitable for use in a beverage composition. Such an agent, when monoprotic, typically has a pKa of less than about 2.6, and preferably, has a pKa from about -7.0 to about 2.5, and most preferably, from about 1.25 to about 2.5, including all ranges subsumed therein. When polyprotic, the antimicrobial agent typically has a pKa₁ of less than about 2.6 and a pKa₂ of less than about 3 or greater than about 6. Illustrative non-limiting examples of such antimicrobial agents include sodium bisulfate, potassium bisulfate, ammonium bisulfate, hydrochloric acid, phosphoric acid as well as hydrochlorides glycine, alanine, valine, leucine, isoleucine, phenylalanine, asparagine, ~~glytamine~~glutamine, tryptophan, serine, tyrosine, hydroxyproline, cysteine, proline mixtures thereof or the like. It is also within the scope of this invention to employ polypeptides that have backbones and side chains consistent with the above-identified pKa values.